

Cannabis

Potential Outcomes of the Legalization of Cannabis

Colorado and Washington were the first states to legalize cannabis for recreational use in 2012. Since then, 19 other states have followed suit. In November 2022 Eau Claire County included a referendum item on the general election ballot about the legalization of recreational cannabis. The results showed two-thirds of voters in favor of legalization for residents over 21.



Accidental Poisonings & Exposures

- Unintentional cannabis exposures increased 61% from 2019–2021 in Colorado⁵
- Poison Control Center calls related to cannabis exposure among children under 6 increased by 140% from 2018–2021 in California⁶



Addiction

- An estimated 3 in 10 cannabis users have a cannabis use disorder²
- Use of high potency products has stronger effects on the brain, and may increase the risk of addiction²



Cannabis Potency

- Potency in cannabis seized by the DEA has increased from about 4% in 1995 to over 15% in 2021⁹
- Increased access to high potency products which can lead to emergency room visits



Effects on Pregnant People & Babies

- Cannabis use during pregnancy can cause²
 - Lower birth weight
 - Abnormal neurological development
- Chemicals from cannabis can be passed through breastmilk, though the effects aren't fully known



Health Concerns

Physical Health

- Damage to lung tissue²
- Increased risk of stroke and heart disease²
- Directly affects the part of the brain responsible for attention, memory, and learning²

Mental Health

- Increase risk of depression, anxiety, suicidality, psychosis, and schizophrenia²
- Suicides in Colorado with cannabis present in toxicology reports increased from 12% in 2012 to 29% in 2019⁸



Increases in Drugged Driving

- Cannabis can impair important skills required for safe driving. Studies have shown an association between acute cannabis use and car crashes²
- Since legalization in Colorado, traffic deaths with drivers testing positive for cannabis increased 138%⁸



Youth

- Using cannabis at an earlier age increases the risk of developing cannabis use disorder later in life²
- Cannabis use in youth may have permanent effects of the brain²
- In 2019, Eau Claire County middle and high school students thought cannabis is less risky than tobacco, alcohol, or prescription drugs¹⁰



Better Scientific Research

Legalization can remove barriers for research and expand knowledge on the effects of cannabis



Health Benefits

- Some studies show chemicals found in the cannabis plant can be helpful in treating²
 - nausea and vomiting caused by cancer chemotherapy
 - neuropathic pain (caused by damaged nerves)



Potential for Fewer Drug Arrests

- 52% of all Wisconsin drug arrests in 2021 were cannabis related⁴
- A Black person in Wisconsin is 4.2 times more likely to be arrested for cannabis possession than a white person⁷



Potential Tax Revenue & Job Creation

- In 2021, Colorado collected over \$2 billion in taxes, licenses, and fee revenue from cannabis¹
- Legalization can create new job opportunities in the cannabis industry

Key Resources for More Information

[What We Know About Marijuana](#) (CDC)

[The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact](#) (RMHIDTA)

[What You Need to Know About Marijuana Use and Driving](#) (CDC)

[Marijuana Decriminalization and Legalization](#) (DP)

[Principles for Protecting Youth, Public Health, & Equity in Cannabis Regulation](#) from Getting It Right from the Start

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2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, September 9). *Marijuana and Public Health*. <https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/index.htm>

3. Colorado Department of Transportation. (2022). *Cannabis and Driving: Data and Research*. Retrieved December 28, 2022, from <https://www.codot.gov/safety/impairment-driving/druggeddriving/data>

4. National Incident-Based Reporting System. (2022). *Arrests for Drug Possession Offenses* (2021) (Data Set). Federal Bureau of Investigation. Available on <https://crime-data-explorer.app.cloud.gov/pages/explorer/crime/arrest>

5. Rocky Mountain Poison & Drug Safety. (2022). *Reported Marijuana Exposures in Colorado* (2021) (Data Set). Available on <https://marjuanahelthinfo.colorado.gov/health-data/poison-center-data>

6. California Department of Public Health. (2022). *Poison Control Calls About Marijuana Exposures in Children* (Infographic). Retrieved December 29, 2022, from <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDC/PH/SA/CDPH%20Document%20Library/cannabis-poison-control-infographic.pdf>

7. American Civil Liberties Union. (2020). *A Tale of Two Countries: Racially Targeted Arrests in the Era of Marijuana Reform*. <https://www.aclu.org/report/tale-two-countries-racially-targeted-arrests-era-marijuana-reform>

8. Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area. (2021). *The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado: The Impact*, 8 (Sept 2021). Retrieved December 29, 2022, from https://www.rmhidta.org/_files/ugd/4a67c3_b591ac360f974a8bbf868d2e3e25d13d.pdf

9. Potency Monitoring Program. (2022). *Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol and Cannabidiol Potency of Cannabis Samples Seized by the Drug Enforcement Administration, Percent Averages from 1995–2021* (153) (Data Set). National Institute on Drug Abuse. <https://nda.nih.gov/research-topics/marijuana/cannabis-marijuana-potency>

10. Eau Claire City-County Health Department. (2019). *Youth Risk Behavioral Survey*. <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/53744/637389081761330000>

